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ABSTRACT

This annual report is the first to detail the services and achievements of Alaska's Division of Early Development. The report begins with a letter from the state's Department of Education Commissioner and a description of the Division, formed in 1999 to strengthen the ring of services for young children and their families in Alaska. The remainder of the report is comprised of descriptions of the background, services, challenges, accomplishments, and future foci of the following programs: (1) Head Start; (2) Even Start; (3) child care assistance; (4) child care licensing; (5) child nutrition and USDA commodity programs; (6) education for homeless children and youth; (7) AmeriCorps; and (8) the Alaska Children's Trust. (KB)

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Division of Early Development

Annual Report 2000

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Department of Education & Early Development

State of Alaska

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Division of Early Development

Annual Report
Fiscal Year
2000

Division of Early Development

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Inside

Division of Early Development - Annual Report

Foreward

A Message from the Commissioner i
The Division 1

Programs

Head Start 3
Even Start 5
Child Care Assistance 7
Child Care Licensing 10
Child Nutrition & USDA Commodities 12
Education for Homeless Children & Youth 15
The Alaska State Community Service Commission - AmeriCorps 17
The Alaska Children's Trust 20

Commissioner's Message

With great pleasure and now relief, we present our first annual report on the services and achievements of the Division of Early Development. The importance and value of early development programs for children in Alaska—and everywhere— has both measurable and intangible significance. Young children who have the advantage of decent nourishment and healthy learning environments simply lead better, happier, and more productive lives.

The business of providing quality care and education to Alaska's young children may be the most important work we do for the future well being of our people and communities. Programs must be designed with enough structure to maintain high standards and enough flexibility to be effective under a broad range of circumstances.

Deputy Commissioner Yvonne Chase, who leads the Division, and I are proud of our efforts to reach as many children as possible, and we are challenged by the need to do more, to reach more families, to make this work meaningful and lasting. Our dedicated staff knows that the impacts we have now on childrens' lives will affect our communities for generations to come.

As you read through these pages, know that between the lines are the experiences and energies of so many. Supporting our staff, we are fortunate to have the understanding and commitment of Governor Knowles and many supportive legislators working together to improve the lives of Alaska's people, starting with our youngest citizens. With an unwavering belief that early development programs help children become lifelong learners, the bottom line is that Alaska's families and their future are worth the efforts we make today.

Thanks again for your time and interest in our programs.

Shirley J. Holloway

Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Yvonne Chase

Yvonne M. Chase, LCSW
Deputy Commissioner

The Division

The Division of Early Development was established in 1999 to strengthen the ring of services that help young children rise to their highest potential.

Our Mission:
To provide safe, stable, culturally and developmentally appropriate high quality early care and education programs to young children statewide.

The creation of the Division represents a landmark for Alaska. Other states have followed, but Alaska was the first to both recognize and institute the important link between early development and K-12. Recent studies show that participation in programs like Head Start, and time spent in high-quality child care environments, lay the groundwork for future academic and social success.

The State plays a critical role in ensuring that this strong foundation is laid for every Alaska child. Approximately 60% of Alaska's preschool age children have working parents. While early childhood care is a parental choice, research has shown that children in families with incomes below the poverty level are at greatest risk of being in environments that do not advance their cognitive or social skills. Staff in the Division of Early Development are committed to the idea that every child should be given the resources to succeed. The future of our state depends upon it.

Thanks to the creation of the Division, early development programs from the former Department of Community and Regional Affairs, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Education were combined to form the new Department of Education & Early Development. The Division of Early Development brings together a seamless continuum of services to strengthen young children and their families.

- **Head Start and Early Head Start** are comprehensive child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, their families and pregnant women.

- **Child Care Assistance and Child Care Licensing** work to provide safe, high quality child care environments for the 104,000 Alaska children age 0 through 12 who spend part or all day in child care settings.

- **Even Start** provides intensive, long-term family literacy training, to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy to improve educational and vocational opportunities for low-income families.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth commits $50,000 in federal funds to grantees to help ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to free, appropriate public education, including public preschool.

Alaska Children's Trust provides grants to communities to help prevent child abuse and neglect, and help create safe and healthy communities for today's children and generations to come.

The Child Nutrition and USDA Commodity programs help schools and child care centers provide nutritious meals, ensuring that children arrive in the classroom ready to learn.

The Alaska State Community Service Commission promotes the ethic of service and volunteering to engage Alaskans of all ages and backgrounds in tangible, results-oriented projects, improving the quality of life in communities around the state.

Goals

Each of these programs works closely together and with other state departments and local organizations, to fill gaps and prevent overlaps in service provision. Together the Department of Education & Early Development seeks to achieve three main goals:

- To provide safe, healthy, and nurturing environments for children.
- To provide assistance to parents (financial and program) to make the best choices for their children.
- To create a "seamless" system for children from birth through K-12.

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Head Start

The Head Start Program has made a huge impact on the children of Alaska. Throughout the state, kids have a chance to begin their lives with a healthy, educational, and all-inclusive program. Thanks to this program, we can look forward to a very bright future, with engaged and self-sufficient people making solid decisions for their lives and extended communities.

Photo courtesy of RurAL CAP

92% of Head Start children received all immunizations.

Head Start is a comprehensive program that provides a wide range of services to children and families. It also contributes to the economy, stability, and growth of families and communities. Head Start supports the economic development of communities by investing funds directly in the communities it serves. Head Start program funding pays the salaries of locally-hired staff; leases or rents Head Start facilities; hires locally for facility maintenance and repairs; and, purchases all supplies like food, fuel or equipment from local businesses. In FY00, over 29 million Head Start dollars were invested in the state, of which $3.7 million were State general funds.

Head Start invests in people- parents, staff and community members. Local programs must provide opportunities for parents to be actively involved in decisions about their programs. Parents are elected to serve on Policy Councils and to make decisions about budgets, hiring, policy and other program activities. Parents have varied opportunities to participate in education programs in literacy, job readiness, parenting, nutrition, family wellness, and career development.

Head Start also offers parents opportunities for work experience through volunteering, as well as rewarding job opportunities. Alaska Head Start programs currently employ 384 parents of former Head Start students.

BACKGROUND

Head Start is a nationwide program established in 1965 to combat the devastating effects of poverty. Alaska Head Start programs were also established in 1965 when federal funds were granted to private organizations to establish local programs. In 1978, state funds became available to Head Start grantees to support existing programs and help expand services to more children. Today there are 17 Head Start grantees in Alaska that receive direct federal Head Start funds, state funds, and other funds and support directly from local communities.

In addition to opportunities for parents, Head Start standards require that program staff have adequate training and education. Currently every Head Start classroom must have at least one teacher with a minimum of a Child Development Associate credential. Head Start offers opportunities and supports for staff to obtain required credentials and degrees and other career advancements.

Head Start is linked to success and quality. The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) collects data annually on Head Start programs, classrooms, teachers, parents and children.

MISSION

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, their families and pregnant women. Head Start services are responsive and appropriate to each child's and family's development, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

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FACES provides longitudinal research on the quality and effects of Head Start. Based on data collected, Head Start graduates show significant gains in vocabulary, letter recognition, writing and other pre-reading skills during their kindergarten year. They perform above levels of other low-income children on vocabulary measures, show a significant expansion of their early writing skills, and demonstrate significant gains in their social skills and cooperative behaviors.

SERVICES

In FY 2000, Head Start:

- Issued grants to 17 Head Start grantees serving children in 107 communities;
- Provided technical assistance and resources to grantees;
- Developed and distributed a statewide newsletter; and,
- Partnered with other statewide efforts to address specific issues of concern for young children.

Head Start also provides key health screenings, follow-up and treatment to all participating children, as well as dental services and immunizations. Family screenings respond to health care access issues and assess family strengths and risks. For families with special needs children, screenings, referrals and parent education are provided.

CHALLENGES

Currently Head Start serves less than half of the children eligible to attend. Expanding services to reach more eligible children and strengthening existing programs continue to be key issues.

Children and families served by Head Start face a number of serious challenges - poverty, few employment opportunities in rural areas, access to job training and education programs. Economic development is a critical component in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Rural Head Start families and programs face unique challenges, lack of health care providers, reliable and safe sanitation, water supplies and housing. Continued and renewed efforts to develop sustainable community infrastructure still remain a key issue.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

Families and communities volunteered 79,956 hours for Head Start.

3,483 children from 3,156 families were enrolled in Head Start and participated in child growth and development training.

2,609 families were linked to social services.

239 Head Start staff are able to communicate in two or more languages.

65% of Head Start children completed medical screenings, and 92% received all immunizations.

Head Start enhanced childrens' growth and development and helped strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children.

Most Head Start programs operate on a part year, part day basis. But more and more families are faced with the need for full day, full year programs as they enter the workforce or job training programs. Head Start is faced with the challenge of responding to this need. Options are expansion funding tied to full day/year services, program collaboration with child care/preschool, public school.

Beginning in 2003, half of all Head Start staff must have an AA, BA or advanced degree in Early Childhood Development. Providing opportunities for staff to obtain necessary educational coursework that is accessible, affordable and meets standards is a key challenge, especially in rural areas of the state.

GOALS FOR 2001

- Increase percentage of eligible children.
- Increase the number of programs around the state.
- Increase access to programs.
- Maintain current programs in 107 communities.
- Support high-quality services.

Even Start

Family Literacy Program

Reading is something that those who can read generally take for granted. Those who cannot, or never learned to do well, know the barriers in life that illiteracy present. Last year, the Even Start program both dispersed money dedicated towards teaching people to read and inspired about 100 Alaskan families to make reading a priority, with support on a long-term basis. This voluntary program is based on the whole family as participants. The successes are both quantifiable in numbers and in the proud smiles of new readers.

Background

Even Start is a federally funded family literacy program that helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy and to improve educational and vocational opportunities for low-income families. Competitive grants fund partnerships between Local Education Agencies (LEA) and nonprofit community-based organizations. Even Start services are voluntary but must be sufficiently intensive and of sufficient duration to help families make sustainable changes.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Engage in interactive literacy activities with their children.
- Become primary teachers for their children and full partners in their education.
- Improve their own literacy skills to become economically self-sufficient.

Even Start is family focused rather than singly focused on the parent or the child. Families must participate in all three core areas of the program:

- Children ages 0-7 years must participate in early childhood education services;
- Parents must participate in adult literacy services that lead to economic self-sufficiency;
- Both parents and children must engage in interactive literacy activities together.

Services

Four grantee partnerships provided services to families in FY 2000:

- IMPACT Family Literacy Program in Anchorage;
- Even Start Family Learning Center at Gruening Park in Juneau;
- Kachemak Bay Campus, Family Learning Center in Homer;
- Family Learning Project in Wasilla.

To be eligible, at least one parent and one or more of their children must participate together in all core components of the project. The program is open to parents who are eligible for adult education and literacy activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and their children from birth through seven years of age.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

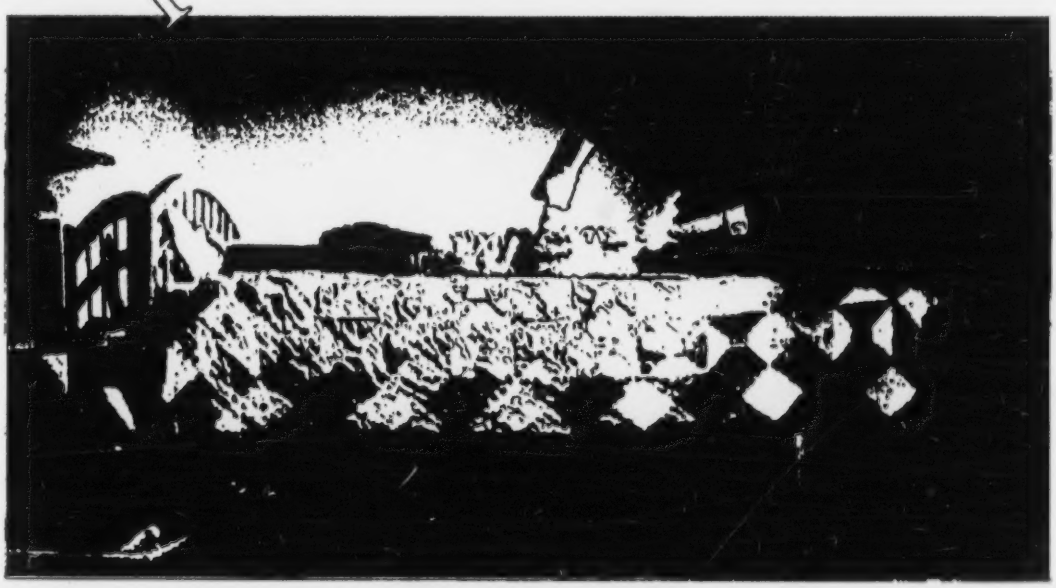
Disbursed approximately $700,000 in four grants to family literacy partnerships. Served 100 families for an average of 18 months.

Future Focus

Even Start serves families who experience a number of barriers related to poverty ranging from lack of transportation, housing problems, domestic violence, depression and inter-generational illiteracy. To be effective, services must be long-lasting and intense in nature. Keeping families involved in the program and progressing, in spite of the many obstacles they face in their lives, is a constant challenge.

Plans to Implement Change

- Increase level of self-sufficiency for families by improving literacy of parents and children to promote success in the workplace and in school.
- Maintain funding for current grantees.
- Increase number of programs as federal funds become available.
- Continue to evaluate grantee performance to measure program effectiveness.



Child Care Assistance

Ask any parent about what is most important to them and they will always answer, their kids. In Alaska, parents are no different, but our ability to provide consistently regulated environments, affordable and top-quality care, is light years away from cities and towns in the "Lower 48" that have access to established road systems and sufficient local resources.

We are pleased to announce our successes and discuss the challenges before the people of Alaska. We provided substantial subsidies for parents in more than 30 communities across the state, as well as supporting the staff with nearly 10,000 hours of professional training. We are making every effort possible to enhance and improve the quality of facilities and the staff who care for our children while parents are at work. While we have much to be proud of, there is so much to be done, in every community.

Program Mission

To promote excellence in child care standards and to help ensure that safe, healthy, quality child care is affordable and accessible to all Alaska's children and families.

A Snapshot

Today, approximately 104,000 out of the 109,000 children aged 0 through 12 in Alaska spend part or all day in child care homes or centers, preschools, or before and after school care programs. Recent research clearly demonstrates that stimulating environments with creative, interactive, age-appropriate activities promote brain growth and development in young children, setting the stage for healthy future functioning. More than ever before, Alalaska has a responsibility to ensure that child care facilities are rich, high quality environments for young children.

A key element of a high quality child care facility is a well-educated, well-compensated staff who stay the distance...

Quality care environments are not just critical for children, they are integral to successful working families. If parents cannot find child care they can afford and trust, their employment, education or training activities will be compromised. Quality child care is necessary for working families to maintain employment and contribute to a healthy economy for the community as a whole. For families with low incomes, or those enrolled in welfare to work programs, finding and keeping child care is critical to becoming self-sufficient.

Services

Supporting working families

Child Care subsidies pay a percentage of direct child care costs for approximately 5,158 children per month, allowing parents to work knowing their children are being cared for in safe, healthy environments. Three Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide individualized information to families seeking child care throughout the state.

Inclusive Child Care Project promotes the inclusion of children with special needs in quality child care settings.

Supporting child care providers

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide education, work-related information and training for eligible caregivers to reduce risk to children in care and encourage high quality standards.

Child Care grants help eligible child care providers to promote quality care and improve facilities to ensure health and safety standards are met. These grants increase the viability of many small businesses around the state.

The Toy Project will result in a "toy box" that contains information and educational materials to assist providers to develop age-appropriate, challenging activities for children in their care. The boxes will be distributed to licensed child care providers in calendar year 2001.

Developing a continuum of child care services

Child Care Assistance works closely with other programs and Departments to create a continuum of services. These include:

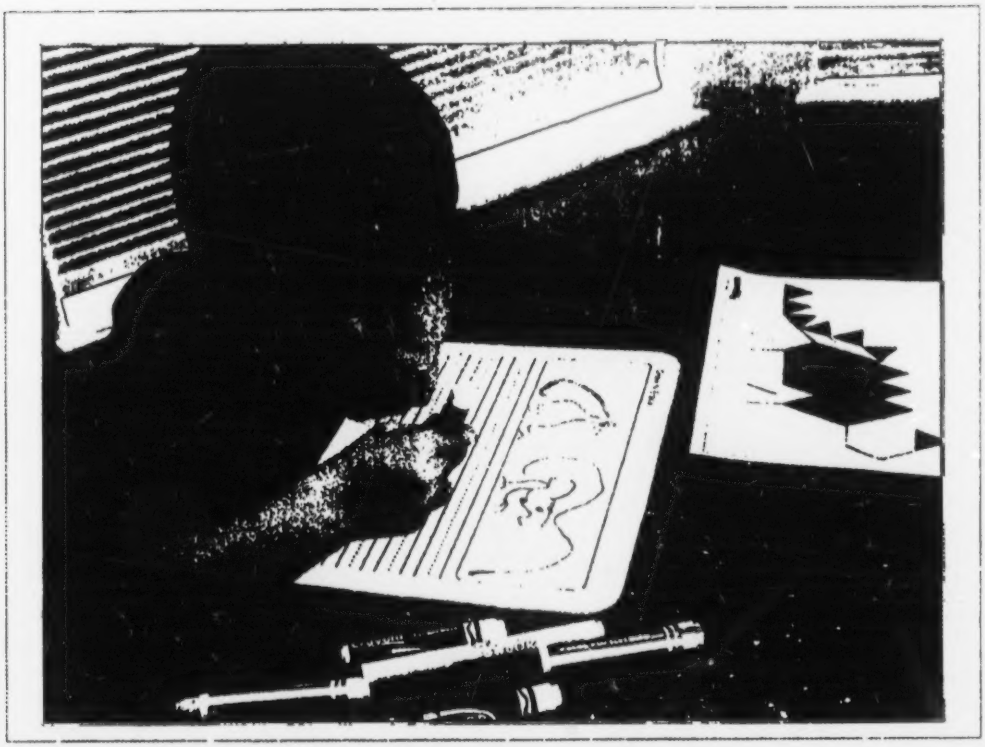
- Departments of Health and Social Services and Labor & Workforce Development;
- Divisions of Public Assistance, Family and Youth Services, and Public Health;
- Head Start, Food and Nutrition, Child Care Licensing
- Alaska Native organizations and the Alaska Job Center Network.

Achievements

- Provided child care assistance in more than 30 Alaskan communities.
- Developed child care services and programs by forming meaningful partnerships with agencies and organizations, public and private.
- Provided 9,638 hours in training and technical assistance to child care providers statewide.

For 2001, specific objectives include:

- Support working families.
- Maintain availability of child care subsidy grant.
- Target rural communities through regional resource and referral grantee agencies to increase level of training available for providers and parents.
- Develop a continuum of training, technical assistance and incentives to encourage and facilitate providers to increase quality to the highest level.
- Develop a continuum of child care services.
- Collaborate with other agencies and organizations to interface child care with other programs and services.



- Promote quality child care environments.
- Collaborate with other agencies to develop consumer education media campaign on quality child care.
- Perform evaluation of child care grants to maximize effectiveness of grant dollars in creating high quality environments.
- Continue to promote child care as an integral part of policy making regarding education, welfare to work, family health and economic development.
- Support employment of low-income parents by subsidizing child care costs and providing referral for approximately 5,000 children per month.

Goals

The goal of the ***Alaska Child Care Program*** is to promote quality, affordable, and accessible child care for Alaska's children and families. This includes programs that allow parents to work or train for employment, and that support child care providers as an integral part of the state and local economy. This main goal is supported through these primary components:

- Support for working families, especially low-income working families to find and keep quality child care.
- Support for child care providers to build a stable, competent, well-paid workforce.

Child Care Licensing

A few of the first things a parent wants to know about a child care facility is: will my child be safe here? Who will be with my child while I am not? Is this a licensed child care facility? The bare truth is somewhat discouraging— for the 104,000 Alaskan children aged 0 through 12 in some type of child care, there are only 16,000 available spots for them in ***licensed*** facilities. Licensing of child care facilities provides both security for parents and measurable standards of acceptance for the benefit of everyone.

A key element of a high quality child care facility is a well-educated, well-compensated staff who stay the distance and are committed for the long term. While child care is one of the fastest growing occupations in the nation, unfortunately, it also has one of the lowest pay scales. An average child care home provider makes about $14,000 a year, usually with no benefits like health insurance, retirement or paid annual leave. This meager level of compensation contributes to another statistic: staff turnover is higher among child care workers than in any other job category, except gas station attendants.

Promoting quality child care environments

- Consumer Education initiatives promote safe and healthy child care environments.
- Child Care licensing promotes attainment of national quality standards.
- Licensing requirements promote adherence to maintaining quality.

Achievements

- Promoting quality child care environments through training, technical assistance, and quality improvement initiatives.
- Successfully transitioned the responsibility of child care licensing from DHSS to Early Development on July 1, 2000.

Future Focus

Current state law requires a child care provider to be licensed if she/he cares for more than four children who are not related to her/him. For the 104,000 Alaskan children aged 0 through 12 in some type of child care, and only 16,000 places in licensed facilities, it is clear the situation is getting worse, not better. The percentage of children in licensed care has dropped over the last year. Registered providers, who are not required to meet the same rigorous standards as licensed providers and who do not receive a site inspection of facilities, care for some of the remainder. Others are cared for by an unknown number of exempt providers operating without licenses or registration certificates. These facilities operate without any support or oversight from the State.

The incentives for a child care provider to become licensed include becoming eligible for the child care grant for quality improvements of facilities and programs, receiving valuable training and technical assistance, and receiving

support to maintain a high quality environment for the children and families served. To encourage more providers to become licensed, more incentives must be developed, and the process for licensing and accreditation must be streamlined in order to encourage registered providers to build their capacity to become licensed and ultimately accredited.

In addition to ensuring that existing facilities are safe and healthy, we must also increase the number of places for children in quality child care settings. More places are needed for infant care and care during nontraditional work hours. As welfare to work efforts continue to succeed, demand for child care continues to increase, creating an even greater demand for child care facilities and subsidy dollars.

For 2001, specific goals include:

- Increase quality child care service choices for Alaskan families.
- Support child care providers through training and technical assistance.
- Increase number of trained providers for children aged 0-3.
- Increase number of licensed and accredited facilities.
- Finalize and implement new child care licensing regulations.
- Increase level of training, technical and technological support for all regulating staff.

Child Nutrition & USDA Commodity Programs

Simple hunger can create complicated problems. When we feel hungry, it is hard to concentrate on much else. Children know this better than anyone, and their behavior speaks louder than words.

Ensuring that children arrive in the classroom ready to learn rather than ready to eat, is the primary objective of the Child Nutrition program. Last year, our program provided millions of dollars to Alaska's school districts and residential child care providers. Fewer hungry children means more productive days and happier lives.

Mission

- To make benefits of the School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, Summer Food Service, After-School and At-Risk Snacks and Child and Adult Care Food programs available to eligible sponsors in Alaska.
- To provide resources to support federal child nutrition program sponsors in Alaska.
- To provide USDA commodities to school districts, residential child care institutions, child care centers, the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), summer food service programs and charitable and correctional institutions.

Background

The Child Nutrition program distributes federal funds for reimbursement of meals served to eligible children and adults in approved agencies. In addition, the program provides nutrition education and food service management training and resources to eligible programs and institutions.

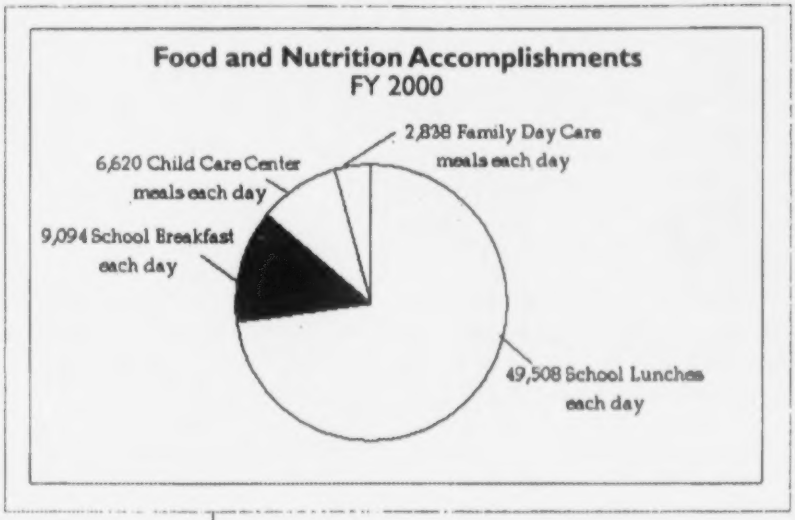
The USDA Commodity Program helps school districts reduce their meal costs by making commodity-processed foods available. In addition, the program facilitates transportation of commodities, performs site inspections and provides training and technical assistance to program participants.

Services

The Child Nutrition program administers for USDA:

- National School Lunch
- School Breakfast
- Special Milk
- Summer Food
- Child And Adult Care Food

Services are provided to school districts, child care centers, licensed family day care homes, residential child care institutions, summer camps, homeless shelters, adult day care centers, government and tribal organizations and national youth sports programs.


Food and Nutrition Accomplishments
FY 2000
2,838 Family Day Care meals each day
6,620 Child Care Center meals each day
9,094 School Breakfast each day
49,508 School Lunches each day

The USDA Commodity Program:

- Conducts on-site reviews of agencies receiving commodities;
- Attends technical assistance workshops and conferences;
- Provides workshops to recipients;
- Provides transportation for distributing commodities statewide;
- Helps school districts reduce meal costs by purchasing commodity-processed foods.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

Child Nutrition:

- 47 school districts, 387 schools provided 49,508 school lunches each day
- 29 school districts, 191 schools provided 9,094 school breakfasts each day
- 80 Child Care Center sponsors served 6,620 children each day
- 13 Family Day Care sponsors served 2,838 children each day
- Secured $84,354 in USDA grant funds to promote the importance of school lunch and breakfast
- Expanded Summer Food Program, which targets out-of-school low income youth, provided a higher reimbursement rate to attract more sponsors

USDA Commodity Program:

- Distributed $2,327,137 in USDA commodities statewide
- Provided training and technical assistance to 22 school districts at annual conference
- 78% of Alaska school districts participated in commodity processing, reducing meal costs for districts by approximately 20%
- Distributed Department of Defense fresh produce to school districts to further reduce meal costs

Future Focus

Good nutrition is critical for a child's growth and development. Starting while a child is still in the womb, healthy foods in adequate amounts build strong bodies and minds. Educating the public regarding nutrition, and encouraging eligible children and adults to participate in nutrition programs is an ongoing challenge.

Starting the day with a good breakfast is a key focus of Child Nutrition programs this year. Common sense tells us that hungry children do not learn at their full potential, but the importance of breakfast has recently been demonstrated by a University of Minnesota study. Over a three-year period the study showed that:

Children who participated in the School Breakfast Program had increased concentration, more energy, fewer visits to the school nurse and fewer discipline problems.

In addition, breakfast is associated with improved learning.

A study completed at Harvard reports that schools that offer free breakfast to all students regardless of income reported higher math grades and lower absenteeism. In Alaska, one-half of the schools that participate in the lunch program also serve breakfast.

Homeless children are particularly vulnerable and benefit from regular meals provided to them at school. Federal legislation now allows for the creation of programs targeted to this population. The state is now able to target and fund snacks for in-school and after-school youth programs.

Another focus for Child Nutrition is childhood obesity. Alaska ranks fourth in the nation for high obesity rates in adults. Good eating habits start at an early age. Nutrition education resources and on-site presentations to children, parents and teachers set kids on the right track for lifelong healthy eating.

The USDA Commodity Program works in conjunction with some of the Child Nutrition programs and strives to provide USDA commodities to school districts in an efficient cost-effective manner, while continuing to improve quality of service.

- Improve access to technical assistance and training for sponsors.
- Provide training materials to enhance USDA Commodity Program's services.
- Continue to reduce meal costs for school districts by increasing availability of processed commodities.

Plans to Implement Change

Child Nutrition:

- Market programs to school districts and child care programs not currently participating.
- Increase number of sponsors participating in the School Breakfast Program.
- Increase number of sponsors participating in the After-school and At-Risk Snack programs.
- Increase number of sponsors participating in the Homeless Nutrition Program.
- Order and distribute USDA foods equitably and in a cost-effective manner.
- Provide technical assistance at annual conference.
- Hold at least one State Food Distribution Advisory Council meeting.
- Encourage more districts to participate in commodity processing.

Education for Homeless Children & Youth

Homelessness seems like a distant nightmare to most Alaskans. When we think of our children, the idea is unthinkable. However, a recent survey estimates that 4,700 school-age children in Alaska do not have a reliable, safe place to sleep at night. In addition to these, 966 children of preschool age are homeless. Most of these children live in Anchorage, but homelessness also occurs in rural communities. Hoonah, for example, reports 35 homeless children, nearly 15% of their total children and youth population.

This is the sole focus of our program. Along with funding services, we spent last year gathering data on Alaska's homeless problem and implementing steps to get kids in safe, reliable, and predictable homes where a child can flourish.

Background

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program commits $50,000 in federal funds to grantees who help ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to free, appropriate public education, including public preschool. Grant funds also support supplemental services that assist homeless children and youth achieve the same student performance standards established for all children.

Services

Using funds from this program, in conjunction with federal Title I funds, the Anchorage School District has implemented an extensive program for homeless children and youth based at North Star Elementary School that serves the entire district. A national evaluator described it as "a model program."

The program has taken many successful steps to remove barriers for homeless children and youth, for example, running a school district shuttle between some elementary schools and shelters, and distributing posters and media to local motels and agencies. In addition to these ongoing activities, the Anchorage School District sponsored "Ready, Set, Go!", a summer program that provided one week of academics, enrollment assistance and school supplies for 75 homeless children grades K-6. 99% of these students subsequently enrolled in school.

In Fairbanks, funds contribute to a program run by Fairbanks Native Association that serves 285 children and youth. In the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, funds assist an after-school program at Willow Elementary that promotes computer literacy and writing skills. While Hoonah receives no funding from this program, the school has extended library hours late into the evening and has made homework classes available to all students. An open enrollment policy at the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District allows parents to send their children to the school of their choice. Many homeless children attend the schools nearest to shelters.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

- Disbursed $50,000 in federal funds to three grantees in Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Mat-Su Valley.
- Submitted program data for statewide survey of homeless children and youth, published August 2000.

Future Focus

Homeless children and families experience numerous barriers that make regular school attendance difficult. The four most frequently identified are:

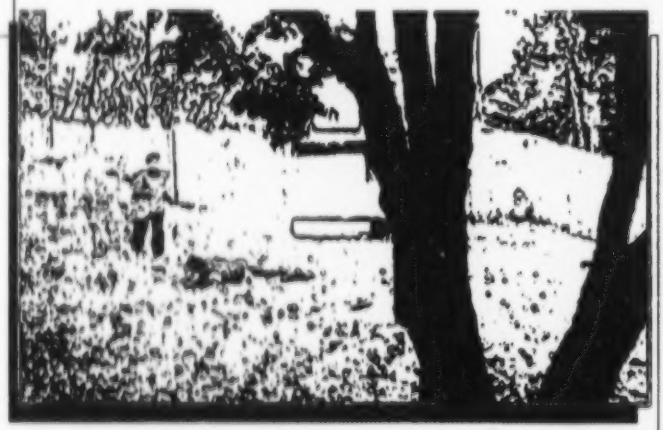
- Transportation
- Immunization requirements
- Legal Guardianship requirements
- Physical examination requirements

Other hurdles to providing assistance to this population include:

- Families lack phones, transportation and an address to receive mail, making simple tasks like setting and keeping appointments, or sending out information very difficult.
- Agencies lack adequate staff time and funding to meet the needs of this population.
- Shelters never have enough beds, particularly transitional housing for families.
- In many districts, no one is assigned to keep track of homeless children to ensure that they get the help they need to continue to attend school.
- As funds decrease, services decrease, while the population continues to grow.

Plans for Implementing Change

- Ensure that all homeless children have access to a free and appropriate public education.
- Develop and implement a homeless data collection system.
- Develop a process for statewide input to review services for homeless children.
- Work with school district personnel to identify the needs of homeless children and youth, address the obligation to serve this population and then assist the districts in providing services.
- Respond to the needs of homeless children and youth through state and local interagency coordination.



AmeriCorps

ALASKA STATE COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMISSION

It used to be that joining the "Peace Corps" was the most worthy and selfless thing to do. Nowadays, we have AmeriCorps to hold in high esteem. Built on the principle of people helping people, the AmeriCorps program is alive and well in Alaska. From helping disadvantaged youth, working to preserve the environment, to helping prevent domestic violence, AmeriCorps volunteers are at work all over Alaska.

The Alaska State Community Service Commission (ASCSC) has significantly increased program activity over the last year. Seeking and receiving an increase in funds from the Corporation for National Service enabled the Commission to increase the level of support for programs. "Learn and Serve," a service program for students, is new this year. The 2001 Unified State Plan sets ambitious but attainable goals and promises a heightened level of activity.

MISSION

To foster, support and promote the ethic of service and volunteerism and to engage Alaskans of all ages and backgrounds in tangible, results-oriented community projects.

Background

The Alaska State Community Service Commission was established in 1994. It obtained official status by administrative order in 1996. The Commission is the primary recipient and oversight agency for AmeriCorps programs funded by grants from the Corporation for National Service. Until recently, the Commission was located in the Department of Community and Regional Affairs. During the reorganization in 1999, it resided briefly in the Department of Labor, and now is under the oversight of the Division of Early Development.

Services

Currently, about 150 FTE AmeriCorps members serve in communities around Alaska. AmeriCorps programs are designed to address four areas: education, public safety, human and environmental needs. ASCSC provides technical assistance and grant funding to nonprofit agencies to expand community and volunteer services to improve quality of life for all residents. Most of Alaska's AmeriCorps members are recruited locally, and respond to issues identified locally.

ASCSC sponsors the following programs in Alaska:

Southeast Alaska Guidance Association

- Serve Alaska Youth Corps - AmeriCorps members lead teams of disadvantaged youth to complete environmental and construction projects.
- ROPE — AmeriCorps members provide a range of prevention activities for pre-K through twelfth grade students including tutoring, mentoring, service-learning and after-school activities.

Rural Alaska Community Action Program

- RurAL CAP ARCTIC — AmeriCorps members work in many capacities: assisting rural Head Start programs, enhancing family literacy and facilitating youth/elder mentor relationships to name a few.
- RurAL CAP RAVEN - These programs focus on improving solid waste, sanitation and environmental conditions in rural Alaska.
- Students In Service Education Awards - AmeriCorps members are placed in social services agencies around Alaska through a partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage Department of Social Work. Students receive partial education awards in return for their internship.

Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

- AmeriCorps members support domestic violence and sexual assault intervention programs across the state, strengthening advocacy and increasing access to services for women and children.

Nine Star - AmAK Literacy Project

- AmeriCorps members work with children and families to improve literacy, computer and functional life skills, building the capacity of the family as a whole.
- In the new Digital Divide Program members work with disadvantaged youth to instruct in the use of the computer and the Internet. The members also provide technical support and maintain equipment in designated school and community center sites in East Anchorage.

AmeriCorps members in the above mentioned programs receive an education award; a modest living stipend and basic health insurance, valuable training and marketable skills, childcare, and the satisfaction of helping people improve their communities.

Learn and Serve Alaska

- The Commission for the first time in 2000 awarded three sub-grants to schools in Craig, Aniak, and Anchorage.
- Students engage in hands-on, structured service projects that meet community needs while helping the student develop personal, civic and academic skills.

The Commission works closely with other Corporation for National Service (CNS) funded programs in the state including:

AmeriCorps VISTA

Volunteers serve in economically challenged communities, fostering self-sufficiency and engaging residents in job skills training, literacy programs, entrepreneurship, health education and community revitalization. There are about 75 VISTA members working throughout Alaska.

National Senior Service Corps

Foster Grandparents serve children with special needs; Senior Companions help other seniors live independently; and volunteers with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) meet a wide range of community needs.

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps

At four campuses across the nation, men and women age 18 to 24 spend 10 months in a full-time residential service program. Their main priority is to improve the environment but these volunteers also address education, public safety and other issues. This year NCCC

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members will be in Alaska to assist the Special Olympic World Games. Last year an advance team worked with our state Special Olympics in preparation for this year's games.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

- Successfully built and strengthened original portfolio of programs.
- Underwent a comprehensive organization of program files.
- Sought and obtained more administrative and program development funding from the Corporation for National Service.
- Trained and more fully engaged the 16 members of the Commission.
- Took a more active role in the training of members, sponsors, and staff.
- Established better systems for program assistance and management.

Photo courtesy of RurAL CAP

Future Focus

To successfully sponsor a wide range of programs, well-designed and maintained partnerships must be in place. A challenge over the next three years will be working well with partners to achieve the goals outlined in the Unified State Plan.

Plans for Implementing Change

The Commission takes a long-term view to planning and goal setting. The goals outlined here are set for the next three years.

Program Development

- Work to build a relationship among program sponsors and potential sponsors to expand programming in both urban and rural Alaska.

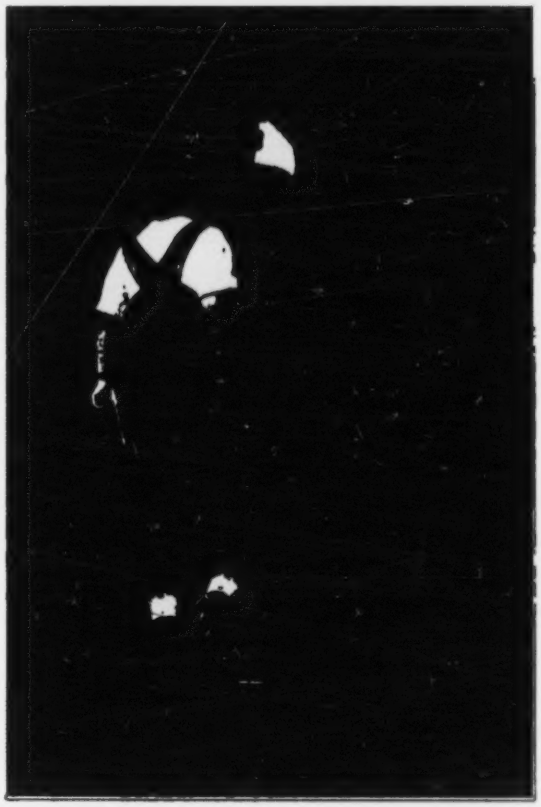
- ***Commit to ensure*** that Learn and Serve/Service Learning is an integral component of sponsor services in both existing and new programs.

- ***Develop strategies*** for the expansion of Education Only Service Awards by introducing these grant possibilities to the university system and other key institutions currently not funded by CNS and ASCSC grants.

NATIONAL SERVIC

Alaska Children's Trust

From helping to be a better parent to encouraging healthy and safe living in Alaska, the Children's Trust has the flexibility to be there when it counts. These "family" based services have had a major impact on the people of Alaska, and also have brought focus to family issues through their active solicitation and fundraising efforts. Educating the broader community about the needs of families close to home continues to increase awareness and donations.



Mission

Alaska's Children deserve to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. The mission of the Alaska Children's Trust is to generate funds for and commit resources to community-initiated programs that strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Background

The Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) is a "permanent fund" for children. In 1996, members of the State Legislature and Governor Tony Knowles invested $6 million to endow the fund. Thanks to private-sector fundraising efforts by the Friends of the Alaska Children's Trust and investment earnings, the principal is expected to break the $10 million mark in early 2001.

Each year, the interest from the principal is awarded through a competitive grant process to community-initiated projects that strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Over the last four years, the Trust has contributed over $1.2 million to prevent child abuse and neglect around the state.

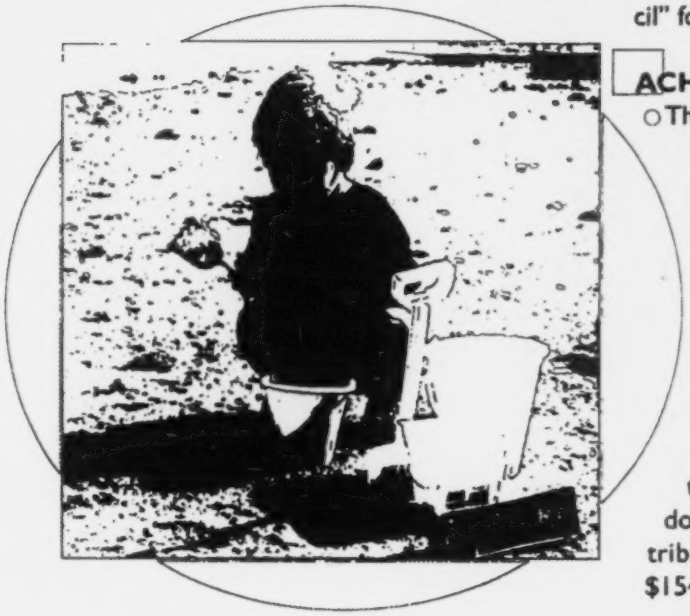
Services

Because each community funded by the Trust tailors its program to suit its own particular needs, the ACT funds a wide variety of prevention efforts. Examples of ACT funded programs include:

- "Project Nurture" in Anchorage, a mentoring program for young, single mothers. This program is in its fourth year of Trust funding and boasts a 100% employment rate for program graduates (with at least 50% employed at the vocational level two years after graduation), no unplanned second pregnancies and no children reported to Department of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) as abused or neglected.

- Saxman Breakfast Club near Ketchikan provides breakfast and before-school support to village youth. Participants in the program have formed an offshoot after-school Homework Club and have plans to make a video of the club. Program managers estimate 70% of the village youth attend the breakfast club, staffed by volunteers. Involvement in school activities has risen dramatically since the club began; school tardiness and absentee rates have dropped.

- Other programs include: a parenting program serving parents with developmental and learning disabilities in Fairbanks; the "Strengthening of Grandfamilies Project" providing resources and services to families headed by grandparents; a family support center in Sutton; and Nome Community Center's "YES Youth Council" for prevention.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2000

- The Trust disbursed $290,384 to sixteen prevention projects, eight of which continue funding from years past.
- Working with the nonprofit organization, the Friends of the Alaska Children's Trust, three regional annual fundraisers are now up and running: the ***Mush for Kids*** in Fairbanks, the ***Alyeska Pipeline Service Company Golf Tournament*** in Anchorage, and, the newest addition, the ***Cruise for Kids*** in Juneau. In its first year this event raised $24,000 in private sector donations to the Trust bringing the total contribution raised through events in 2000 to $154,000.

- Sales of the Heirloom Birth Certificate raised $25,415 in FY2000.
- Sales of the ACT Special License Plate raised $20,080 in FY2000.
- Legislation passed to create an Heirloom Marriage Certificate, which will be available spring 2001.
- ACT staff worked in partnership with the Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network to create and distribute 3,000 Community Resource Kits for community-based child abuse and neglect prevention.

Future Focus

- Growing the principal of the Trust to increase grant giving to communities. For FY 2001, the Trust received 36 proposals and was able to fund roughly half of them.
- Increasing public awareness about child abuse and neglect and encouraging communities to initiate projects to strengthen families and prevent abuse at the local level.
- Increasing individual donor base to the Trust, including bequests.
- Increasing technical assistance and training particularly to rural communities to improve quality of proposals and increase success rate of programs.

Plans to Implement Change

- Create joint funding ventures to leverage ACT funds.
- Host a national conference on child abuse and neglect prevention.
- Complete a five-year evaluation of ACT funded programs.
- Increase coordination with other prevention funders in other disciplines
- Provide on-site training and technical assistance to ACT grantees through partnerships with other providers.
- Implement topic-specific public education campaigns.

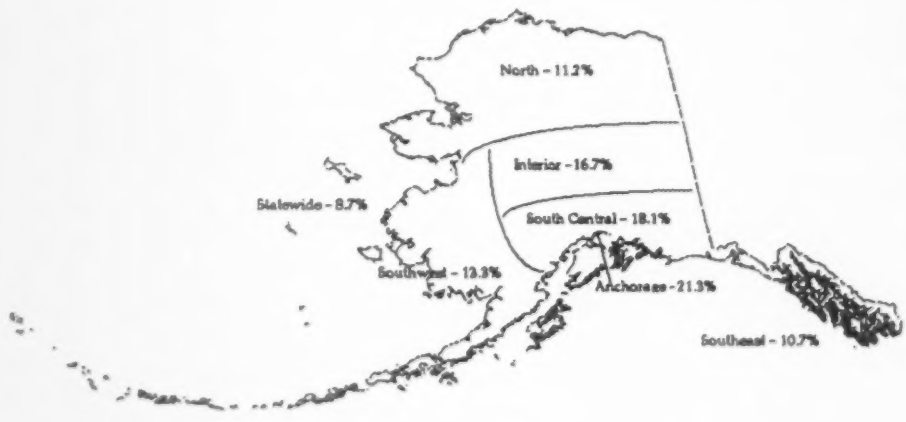
COLLABORATIONS

- Department of Health & Human Services - Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network
- Department of Vital Statistics - Heirloom Birth Certificate
- Division of Motor Vehicles - ACT special license plate

> ***"Your help to us as we struggle to deal with the daily situations involved in raising our two grandsons has been wonderful. Your valuable feedback kept us informed on issues concerning children and grand parenting, and provided us opportunities through workshops and meetings that have helped us to deal with each new facet of child rearing."***

Participant in the *"Strengthening Grandfamilies Project"*, through Volunteers of America made possible by ACT funds.

Statewide Distribution of Alaska Children's Trust Funds
FY 1998 - FY 2001



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